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# GLEB IVANOV, *pianist*



Sarasota, Florida

## Pianist Ivanov shows star quality in recital

By RICHARD STORM, CORRESPONDENT  
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Something unnerving happened during Gleb Ivanov's concert at the Glenridge Performing Arts Center on Saturday evening: His performance was so good that clichés came, unwanted, to the listener's mind, phrases such as "a star is born" and "Horowitz lives again."

Superficially accurate (and regrettably corny), neither of these slick labels does justice to the powerful musical explosion touched off by the young Russian pianist, whose impressive technical gifts very nearly match his interpretive ambition and fierce involvement with the music, unusual so early in a career.

The well-planned program began with a crisp, almost brittle romp through Franz Joseph Haydn's Sonata in E Flat Major (Hob. XVI: 52), in which Ivanov's percussive touch created a sonority similar to that of the fortepiano on which this piece might have been played in its time.

Haydn's sly adventures in key changes and major to minor tonality shifts were beautifully realized, as was the relaxed lyricism of the middle movement, despite the performer's stern visage.

Intensity ruled the rest of the evening, starting with a deeply moving performance of Beethoven's Sonata No. 14 in C Sharp Minor (Op. 27), the "Moonlight." Ironically, this magnificent and highly unconventional composition is seldom programmed these days, possibly because of its overfamiliarity. Go figure.

I cannot recall hearing this glorious sonata played with a beauty so close to unbearable. The audience seemed to stop breathing as the perfectly articulated theme of the first movement sang out over the undulating accompaniment, each voice clear and lyrical.

The wistful dance of the second movement, never rushed, provided the repose we all needed to handle the anguished fireworks of the final movement, a ferocious torrent of music.

Fortunately, the intermission provided an opportunity to pull ourselves together before Ivanov once again dismantled our composure in a near-nuclear version of Franz Liszt's visionary Sonata in B Minor (S. 178).

This is music that, in many respects, could have been written yesterday, so powerfully does it surge beyond the conventions of its time.

Set in one enormous movement, the piece explores both immense sonorities and sensuous intimacy, testing the limits of both performer and instrument.

Here, admittedly, the "channeling Horowitz" cliché came to mind more than once, especially when the occasional technical slip made little difference to the music's impact.

But as the sonata neared a heart-stopping conclusion, it became clear that Ivanov is his own man, a shooting star in his own right.